

Diverse sources of news and information and uncensored discussion of issues of public importance are cornerstones of our democratic society. Deregulation of the radio broadcast industry has concentrated ownership of stations in fewer and fewer hands, seriously eroding the diversity of information available to the public and limiting the opportunities for open public dialogue unconstrained by any one political ideology, especially in smaller communities such as the one in which I reside.

In my community, Clear Channel Communications has acquired ownership of a majority of the local stations and assumed a dominant position. Their near monopoly has enabled them to operate arrogantly and in disregard of the community's interest. For example, during this past year, Clear Channel permitted our local Congressman, James Traficant, to fill in for a week as host of a talk show only a few short weeks before his federal court trial on assorted corruption charges, despite the risk that his appearance might contaminate the jury pool. In a personal conversation I had with station staff it was made clear to me that ratings took precedent over public interest.

The proposed new rules, which will allow a single entity to own not only more radio stations, but also television and newspapers in a single market, will exacerbate an already deleterious situation. I strongly object to the proposed new rules.